A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, May 29. 1712.

NEGLECTING of Trade, and OVER-BURTHENING of Trade, have always been the two *Trading Sins* of this Nation, and yet no People in the World talk so much of Improvements, carrying on Trade, *and the like*, as we do.

Among the many wise Speeches which pass among us for Oracles, these two, *as I noted in my last*, are some of the most Popular:

1. *Tax your Trade*, for Land is over-burthen'd already.

2. *Tax your Superfluities*, but touch not your Necessaries.

Were we not come to a Time, when *every Thing must be Tax'd*, these two Notions would be good, but Circumstances will alter even stated receiv'd Maxims, and therefore I think it cannot but be necessary to state a little the present Circumstances of Trade with respect to Taxes, that we may see and know when these General Rules cease to have the Force of Establish'd Maxims: In order to this, I begin with the

Things

Things we may be ſuppos'd to call Superfluities in Trade, and we ſhall conſider their Circumſtances, with Relation to Taxes under theſe three Heads.

1. What are to be call'd *Superfluities*, and what *Neceſſaries* in Trade?
2. How far theſe are already Tax'd? And,
3. How far they may or may not be farther Loaded?

This deſcending to Particulars, will bring ſeveral Neceſſary Points upon the Stage, about which, People are at ſome Loſs in the preſent View of Taxes: *Some* that complain of Burthening Trade too heavy, may ſee where they are wrong, and where they are Ignorant, and know not whether they are right or no: And ſome who think Trade *never burthen'd enough*, may ſee how their Politicks tend, not only to the Ruin of Trade, but to the bringing of all Taxes home upon the Land at laſt, by a fatal; but neceſſary Conſequence of their Partiality: This is a certain Maxim,

That what Trade cannot pay, the Land muſt: And this is another as true;

That to deſtroy Trade is not the Way to raiſe Taxes from it—Both theſe produce this juſt Inference;

That every Tax ought to be ſo proportioned, that the Thing to be Tax'd may not ſink under it, but be able to pay it.

But to return to my Particulars, of which I am to make Enquiry:

1, What are to be call'd *Superfluities*, and what *Neceſſaries* in Trade?

The Neceſſaries in Trade are,

1. *Bread* or Bread-Corn, *Cattle*, or Fleſh Meat; *Cattle* for Labour, Fiſh, *&c.*
2. *Corn*, ſuch as Horſe-Corn or Provender, and Forrage for the Food of Neceſſary Cattle; for that which is to feed Neceſſary Creatures, becomes Neceſſary of courſe.

NOTE, *Theſe we may ſay and be Thankful, have never yet been Tax'd at all, and we may hope never ſhall, unleſs we ſhould be driven to very great Extremities, ſuch as no true Subject can wiſh to ſee.*

3. *Houſhold-Stuff* and wearing Apparel, either Silk or Woollen, being of our own Manufacture, or of our own Produce, and the Labour of our Poor; as alſo Wool, either our own or Imported.

Theſe have yet been untouch'd, and tho' often puſh'd at, under the Notion of General Exciſes, have been found ſo Impracticable, ſo Oppreſſive, or ſo Unaccountable, that they have eſcap'd pretty well, the Tax on Leather excepted;

4. *Salt, Malt, Coals and Candles, Beer, Ale, Liquors, and Spirits, Theſe may be allow'd to be Tax'd to the utmoſt they can bear.*
5. *Lands* and *Houſes*, theſe I omit, becauſe not in the leaſt related to Trade, which I am now upon.
6. *Linnen* I omit, becauſe, tho' our Foreign Linnen is Tax'd, yet all our Home Linnen goes free.

2. Under the Article of *Superfluities*, comes in almoſt our whole Foreign Importation; and tho' ſome few Things Imported ſeem Neceſſary, ſuch as Sugars, Oyl, Salt Petre, Dying Stuffs, *&c*, yet they are of the kind which have the leaſt Duties paid upon their Importation; but to come to the Litteral Senſe of the Thing, theſe Things are allow'd Superfluities.

1. Wine.

1. Wine.	5. Spice.	9. Cocoa.	11. Furrs, Toys, *Italian* and *French* Trifles of Numberleſs ſorts.
2. Brandy.	6. Wrought Silks.	10. Callicoes, Muſlins, *&c.* and *Eaſt-India* Goods.	
3. Tobacco.	7. Coffee		
4. Fruit.	8. Tea.		

Let any Man Examin the Book of Rates, and tell us which of theſe can bear farther Taxing, and the Conſumption, which is the Foundation of their Importation, be preſerv'd? let them tell us what can thoſe be ſuppoſed to pay a higher Duty than 80 *l. per* Tun the Brandy, 52 *l. per* Tun the *French* Wine, 50 to 60 *per Cent.* on the *Eaſt-India* Goods; 6 *d. per Pound* on Tobacco's, and about 40 *per Cent.* on Wrought Silks, as will be the Caſe in moſt of theſe Articles, when the Taxes now depending ſhall be finiſh'd.

It were eaſie for me to Calculate how far ſome of theſe Taxes are, and *were Trade never ſo free from the War*, would be a leſſening to the Conſumption; for Example, I have often hinted at the Benefit of a *French Trade, and why?* Becauſe while the high Duties remain upon the Wine and Brandy, they can never, by Reaſon of Dearneſs, come at a Price ſo low, as to be our *Common Draught*, and therefore our other Imports from *France* not Ballancing our Exports to *France*, we ſhall be Gainers by that Trade, and we ought to Trade with every Nation we can Gain by.

I could make Calculations from the preſent Import of other Goods, on which High, and, *if I may ſay it*, Extravagant Impoſts have been laid, or upon the Conſumption of other kind of Goods, whoſe Price has riſen to an Extravagant height by any other Accident.

Let the Cuſtom-Houſe Book ſpeak for it, whether, ſince the Duty of 1 *s.* 6 *d. per Pound* upon Pepper, the ſame Quantity has been Conſumed in *England* as before? Or whether 6 *d. per* Pound would not, in all probobility, have raiſed as much Money?— I know the Article of Clandeſtine Trade is Concern'd there, and that upon all the Sea-Coaſt of *Britain*, you may buy Pepper Cheaper by 1 *s. per* Pound, than in *London*; *but of that by itſelf.*

We had lately, an Extravagant Riſing of the Price of Coffee, from 25 *l.* to near 50 *l. per Cent.* will not every common Judgment diſcern, that this Advance of Price put a check to the Conſumption of Coffee over the whole Nation, at leaſt one half; and that in ſuch a manner, that were it to fall again to the former Price, yet it would be many Years before the Quantity formerly uſed would be Imported again? Let any Man ask in the Coffee-Houſes, Do they make one Third of the Coffee they uſed to do? And have not Hundreds of Coffee-Houſes and private Houſes, left it entirely off?

Take the common Expence of Tea, which is now riſen from a Trifle, to a Prodigy in its Conſumption in this Nation; had the Tax upon Tea been 30 or 40 *per Cent.* at its firſt Introduction among us, Will any Man ſuggeſt it would have riſen to ſuch a height as it is now?— So that our *Coffee*, *Tea*, and *Chocolate*, are ſuppoſed to be equal in their Import, to the Spices of the *Dutch*.

Theſe Duties having been in Debate before the Houſe, I have forborn to enlarge here, as to their Conſumption in particular, tho' otherwiſe I have many Uſeful Obſervations to make about them; but let any one conſider the Funds they raiſe, the Duties they pay, and the Conſequence thoſe Duties are to

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us in this Nation; I do not see how they can any more call them Superfluities: If they are not *Necessaries* in themselves, our Circumstances made them Necessaries *to Us*, and the Importation of them ought to be as charily preserved as any thing we Trade in. I have not room here to Dilate upon the Relative of these Things, *viz.* The *East-India* Trade, the Navigation, the Circumstances of the Merchants, and the like.

The Sum of the whole is this, to shew you, *as I think is sufficiently done*, that tho' Superfluities are not Necessaries in themselves, yet our Trade in Superfluities is a Necessary to be preserv'd; and by the Circumstances of that Trade, even these Things which are really Superfluities are become necessary.

Also I think by the Particulars above, it appears that all our Foreign Superfluities are already Tax'd to the Utmost, unless by Taxing, we will Ruin the Importation.

I shall in the next Place, enquire into our Home Superfluities, and see whether we are not yet able to support farther Impositions among ourselves, without farther pressing and Ruining our Trade.

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